

This guide intends to share helpful recommendations and resources for Penn community members who are interested in engaging in individual advocacy with elected officials.

Here, you will find information on:

- Institutional advocacy
- Individual and constituent advocacy
- Association and professional organization advocacy
- Tips for effectively communicating your message
- Resonant messages

INSTITUTIONAL ADVOCACY

- Penn is closely monitoring federal policy changes affecting institutions of higher education and academic health systems. These include a broad range of government actions that impact Penn's missions, operations, and community.
- Penn's leadership and government relations team is directly and consistently engaged with public officials to advocate vigorously for the essential role of higher education, patient care, scientific discovery, our values, and our service to the greater good.
- Any member of the University of Pennsylvania community who becomes authorized to represent an ***official University position*** to a covered official on matters related to appropriations, public policy, legislative or regulatory issues, grants, contracts, nominations, or any other governmental program has an obligation to coordinate their activities with Penn's Office of Government and Community Affairs (OGCA) and report related details to ensure strategic alignment and institutional lobbying compliance.
- Members of the Penn community are encouraged to complement Penn's formal institutional advocacy program in the following ways:

INDIVIDUAL ADVOCACY ON GRANTS AND FUNDING

- Members of the Penn community are encouraged to share their voices in their individual capacities as constituents by reaching out to their elected representatives and advocating for issues important to them.
- Calling your congressperson is the most effective way to influence policy in your individual capacity if you so choose; you can find the contact information for your members of Congress at <https://www.congress.gov/members/find-your-member>.
- Quick tips for outreach: State your views clearly and support them with your individual experience and expert knowledge. Let your elected representatives know why an issue matters to you as a constituent.

- In your personal advocacy, you are welcome to identify as a member of the Penn community to give context for your feedback/comment. For example: “I am a staff member/faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania.”
- Individuals should not represent personal views to be those of Penn or Penn Medicine. Additionally, Penn/Penn Medicine resources (such as email addresses or stationery) cannot be used for non-institutional direct advocacy or lobbying activity. One important reason for this is that Penn is required to report all government relations activities and expenditures; therefore, it is imperative to avoid a scenario in which individual lobbying activity is misconstrued for Penn/Penn Medicine government relations activity.

LOBBY DAYS OR ADVOCACY WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

- Advocacy coordinated in alignment with professional associations, including trade or industry organizations and other interest groups, is another effective way to share views with your elected representatives.
- Lobby days on Capitol Hill or in Harrisburg are regularly coordinated by professional organizations and involve meeting with elected officials and staff to discuss relevant issues. Such organizations coordinate the meetings, set clear talking points on policy matters, and provide attendees with preparation materials.
- Penn community members who engage in advocacy with professional organizations are permitted to identify themselves as University students, faculty, etc., but are urged to clearly indicate to government officials and their staff that your contact represents the interests of your organization, field, or discipline and not the position of the University.
- Many organizations provide helpful updates and information. For example, the Association of American Medical Colleges’ Action Network, which provides updates on how to engage members of Congress on issues of importance to the academic medicine community; their website is <https://aamcaction.org>. Other professional associations are also a good resource for advocacy outreach including the Association of American Universities.
- If you have questions about University positions and policies, please reach out to government relations contacts (included at the end of this document).

These tips can make your outreach more impactful:

- Reach out to members who represent where you live and work, regardless of party affiliation. Elected officials are often responsive to their constituents.

- Research the member's position before you meet, call, or email. Recent statements and policy positions can be found on individual member websites linked through [congress.gov](https://www.congress.gov).
- Communicate your views clearly and succinctly.
- Rely on facts to personalize the issue. Explain how an issue affects your life and community. Try to stick to the policy and the real-world impacts versus the "politics."
- Offer recommendations about how you want the member to address concerns.
- Always explain the local relevance of the issue. Use "I" statements and cite specific examples.
- Remember to thank members and their staff for their time and attention.

RESONANT MESSAGES FOR LAY AND ELECTED AUDIENCES

Community members should feel comfortable engaging in conversations with all audiences about the impact of proposed and actual cuts to research funding. Here are some messaging themes we know resonate with elected officials and the public more broadly:

- The importance of research and its real-world impacts:
 - » If you want to explore research at Penn that is not in your direct domain, *Research at Penn* shares information about research being conducted across the University both online and through a bi-annual print publication: <https://www.upenn.edu/research-at-penn>.
 - » You can learn more about the University's vast research enterprise and multidisciplinary research centers on the Office of the Vice Provost for Research website: <https://research.upenn.edu/about>.
 - » More information on the value of research can be found here:
 - » Medical Research: <https://www.aamc.org/media/75056/download>
 - » Research Universities: <https://www.aau.edu/research/why-university-research-matters>
- Training and workforce pipeline:
 - » The impact this is having on training and young researchers and the negative repercussions for our future as a scientific powerhouse.
 - » Some policies and public funding decisions are adversely affecting our future talent pipeline as training positions are cut.

- International competitiveness: United States world leadership is being threatened. Funding cuts at leading U.S. biomedical research institutions will see other nations, including China, stepping in to fill that vacuum.
- Local impacts on economy, patients, and constituents:
 - » Ex. “My lab employs XXX people and generates XXX in economic activity and has an impact on patients/constituents.”
 - » Ex. “My clinical trial enrolls XXX people and is working on a treatment for XXX disease.”
 - » Research institutions like Penn are frequently large employers that power local and regional economies. For example, Penn supports 1 in 7 jobs across the City of Philadelphia: <https://www.pew.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2025/05/06/nonprofit-sector-is-vital-if-vulnerable-piece-of-philadelphias-economy>.
 - » Penn&Philly also highlights local economic impacts: <https://pennandphilly.upenn.edu/stories/2025-update-economic-impact-in-philadelphia>.

Contacts:

- Penn Office of Government and Community Relations: <https://ogca.upenn.edu>
- Penn Medicine Government Relations: <https://www.pennmedicine.org/about/supporting-our-communities>
- Penn and Penn Medicine Media/Communications: <https://university-communications.upenn.edu/for-the-media>